

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 EA-06 ISO-00 INT-05 AID-05

CIAE-00 COME-00 FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 TRSE-00 XMB-02

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EMIN, GB

SUBJ: CURRENT STATUS AND OUTLOOK FOR GABON'S IRON ORE

1. DIRECTOR GENERAL OF SOMIFER (GABONESE IRON ORE CONSORTIUM) DE L'EPINE CALLED ON AMBASSADOR FEBRUARY 19 TO REVIEW LATEST DEVELOPMENTS. DE L'EPINE STATED GOG PERCENTAGE IN SOMIFER NOW 56 WITH BETHLEHEM 20, FRENCH 10, GERMAN 10 AND REMAINING 4 SPLIT AMONG OTHER EUROPEANS. DE L'EPINE THOUGHT GOG WOULD EVENTUALLY RELINQUISH PART OF ITS 56 PERCENT TO ATTRACT PARTICIPATION OF NEW IRON CONSUMING PARTNER SUCH AS JAPAN. DE L'EPINE ADDED THAT HE PLEASED GOG HAD AND WOULD KEEP LARGEST SINGLE PARTICIPATION AS THIS WOULD INDUCE FAVORABLE TREATMENT OF COMPANY (E.G. RAIL TARIFFS) AND REDUCE CHANCE OF NATIONALIZATION AS WELL AS SPREAD RESEARCH COSTS ESTIMATED AT 8 MILLION DOLLARS OVER NEXT TWO YEARS.

2. DE L'EPINE SAID PLANS MOVING FORWARD FOR CONSTRUCTION OF MINERAL PORT AT SANTA CLARA AND THAT SOROS LIKELY

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TO GET ENGINEERING CONTRACT SHORTLY. HE EXPECTED BOOUE-

BELINGA LEG OF RAILROAD TO BE STARTED IN 1980 AFTER
RESULTS KNOWN OF TEST DRILLINGS CURRENTLY BEING UNDER-
TAKEN BY BETHLEHEM.

3. IN REPLY TO QUERY FROM AMBASSADOR AS TO WHETHER
BUILDING MINERAL PORT MIGHT NOT BE SOMEWHAT PREMATURE
UNTIL RESULTS BETHLEHEM RESEARCH KNOWN, DE L'EPINE SAID
THAT ON BASIS CURRENT OUTLOOK FOR IRON ORE IN TEN YEARS
HE FELT IT VIRTUALLY CERTAIN BELINGA MINE WOULD BE
OPENED. RESULTS OF BETHLEHEM RESEARCH, HE ADDED, WILL
BE MAINLY USEFUL IN DETERMINING HOW MINE SHOULD BE
EXPLOITED (I.E. WHICH PARTS SHOULD BE WORKED ON FIRST).

4. DECONTROL ON RECEIPT.
MCKESSON

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Message Attributes

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